



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Ambassador Sergey Kapinos, Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan

As delivered by Deputy Chief of Mission Carol Fuller
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 14, 2011

We warmly welcome Ambassador Kapinos back to the Permanent Council, though this is also a sad occasion to say good-bye to him. The OSCE Office in Yerevan, under his leadership, has been a valuable advocate for human rights and fundamental freedoms, good governance, gender equality, and youth empowerment. We appreciate the Office's efforts to assist Armenian authorities in combating trafficking in persons, to encourage security sector reform, and to foster economic and environmental welfare and reform of the electoral process.

The United States believes that rule of law and democratic institutions are fundamentally important to all participating States' security and their political and economic development. We encourage the Office to continue supporting the host country in taking steps to strengthen due process, ensure freedom of assembly and expression, and support an open, vibrant, and prosperous society.

Tasked with such a broad agenda, the Office has no shortage of objectives to achieve. Your report attests to the wide range of activities in which the Office is involved and it will be an important challenge for the Office to ensure that it does not lose focus on key priorities and achievable objectives.

We believe, as we have said before, that the priority areas should be police reform, good governance and anti-corruption, reform of the judiciary, and the promotion of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedoms of the media, assembly and religion.

The United States supports your efforts in the area of community policing and welcomes the strategic plan you mentioned. We appreciate your support for the Government's Police Reform Program and will follow with interest its implementation efforts.

We take note of your comments on combating corruption. Serious reform efforts will require considerable resources, cultural change, and political will, and we encourage the Office to continue its strong support to the host country in this area.

We also support the Office's continued focus on election reform in the run-up to 2012/2013 elections. We particularly support its efforts in coordination with the Central Election Commission to train election officials to follow the new Electoral Code and administer the elections properly.

The United States also encourages the Office to maintain its focus on enhancing media pluralism. We welcome the Nationwide Survey on the Implementation of Freedom of Information Laws in Government. We urge you to do even more to foster pluralism in Armenia's media, noting the vital role accurate, accessible information plays in any democratic system.

As you noted, several shortcomings in new Freedom of Assembly legislation still need to be addressed. Moreover, implementation and enforcement of the law has been slow. We value the Office's efforts to train political parties, municipalities, and the judiciary on the new requirements and to help improve their implementation.

We support the Office's efforts to promote dialogue on Armenia's legal framework on freedom of religion or belief. We hope that work continues.

The United States listened with interest to your update regarding the Nubarashen pesticide dump and the activity under the Environment and Security Initiative to mitigate the environmental emergency there. We were pleased to provide significant extra-budgetary funding to this project and encourage the Office to continue its efforts to address similar problems in other regions in Armenia.

The United States strongly values its relationship with Armenia. We look forward to continued cooperation with the Office and the government and people of Armenia, to assist Armenia in with a view towards becoming a more stable, prosperous country.

Once again, we would like to thank you, Ambassador Kapinos, for your hard work and remain hopeful that your successor will maintain the high standards set by youyou're your dedicated team.

Thank you, Chair.